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ABSTRACT

With the increase in demands being made on faculty administrators to broaden educational services, the need for continued training is apparent (Lebsock and DeBlassie, 1975). Drug counseling, special education, teenage alcoholism, and other problems of society surface and simmer in the public schools. In the face of such challenges, a program was undertaken in the early 1970's to upgrade the skills of the educational staff of a suburban St. Louis school system. The training was planned to meet the changing educational needs of the school system by bringing the counselors closer to the "mainstream" of educational activity. There was a perceived need to allow faculty members a chance to work together and to become more cooperative. Training was developed which emphasized interpersonal skills that would be useful between faculty and students as well as between faculty members. The training program was spread out through the school year to maximize faculty contacts and to increase the chance of change. The three papers in this set discuss the rationale for the program, the description of the several phases of program development, and three years of program outcomes. (Author)

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TRAINING COUNSELORS AND TEACHERS IN BEHAVIORAL CONTRACTING

THREE YEARS OF OUTCOMES 27.21

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Paper Presented at the American Educational Research Association Convention, San Francisco, April, 1976.

Deriving clinical applications from research based upon some intervention procedure is a common practice, as is the reverse, developing a researchable design from a clinically effective treatment model. The problem is that we usually have no data on the model which ends up actually put into practice, only its streamlined brother or sister which was hatched experimentally, more easily observed and measured. The present study under discussion here was an attempt to take two elements of effective counseling procedures which make sense for use by counselors in the schools and to train individuals within an institutional setting to employ these skills, then to measure the impact of those trained upon the consumer clientele, the unsuspecting student, and to examine the process of how the training/treatment intervention was employed within a school district. On the face of it, the process does sound simple. As this study demonstrates, it is not a simple process.

This study has a number of important differences from a training study which make it unique. It follows a group who were trained in counseling skills in order to determine effects of that training, not just whether the skills were learned, but whether or not those professionals when using these skills would bring about satisfactory client outcome. The relationship of training to the employment of these skills, and to their effect on a real population could then be examined. In addition, because the study does take place in

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the field, particular intervention strategies described in this study were used in order to assure the involvement of individuals within the school system so that the procedures could be satisfactorily implemented.

Given the broad scope of this intervention approach, the study becomes more complex. Is it (1) an evaluation of a new training procedure? Is it (2) a pre-post no treatment control group study which examines changes in client outcome? Is it (3) an observational description and analysis of the anatomy of an intervention? Or is it (4) all of the above? The closest correct answer would be (4). The problem with the choice of (4) is that if any of the segments of this study were looked at individually, they would be found wanting. For example, subject treatment outcome was not defined in terms of presenting problem so that the class of outcomes specified were institutional rather than client goals. As a study of the learning of training procedures only, it did not employ a no-training control or placebo control group. As an observational analysis of an intervention, it did not contain sufficient detailed observational description of events.

But, I do think that in this case, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. That in combining these different approaches, one can gain a sense of an impact upon this one school system from the perspective of seeing the initial training effects, understanding how the intervention was accomplished within the setting, and the impact these new skills had on the clientele within this institutional setting. By attempting to cover all these areas, the study has in effect weakened the rigor that each area individually might have. By examining them all, however, we can see how each part of this intervention rests upon a previous segment, and how they all inter-relate

to one another. The virtue lies in the combination of the demonstration of learning of a set of skills, the application of these skills and their outcome in a real setting, and the analysis of the various techniques for introducing these new learnings into this particular institutional setting.

Why is this unique combination of ingredients a virtue? For people who share a concern about changes "out there" where it may make a difference, the procedures used here have a message. For example, we hope that if we teach an individual a set of skills so that he/she could possibly be effective with his/her clientele, that professional will, in fact, end up working effectively in some setting. Change in this way can be likened to very slow guerrilla warfare. If we get enough people employed in a setting over time they will magically coalesce and bring about a healthier climate within that setting. I hope I live long enough to see it happen.

On the other hand, if we can make an impact on the setting at a point in time, we might see change occur more quickly. We have also heard of the skepticism former students often bring back to the university, statements like: "They won't let me do what I was trained to do," or "They won't listen to this great new idea for a program I would like to introduce." Clearly, the way in which an intervention is made in the system will be related to its success or failure. This study does describe an implementation strategy which seemed to work in this setting. That strategy has implications for other settings which may share in common some of the characteristics of this setting.

Looking only at the implementation of the intervention itself may give us valuable descriptive information about which we may make some middle-range hypotheses about relationships of one set of behaviors to another. For me,

that situation is analogous to reading a Raymond Chandler thriller, but stopping short of the climax, reading about the process but not the outcome, even though they are closely connected. On one hand, the success of the intervention is related to what is being sold, or the product; on the other hand the final outcome is related to how successfully the intervention was carried out. This study attempts to give the whole story. In writing about the whole story, we lost some of the details, some of which would be crucial in an experimental design. We end with a design which is neither fish nor fowl, neither experimental nor descriptive, but some of both. We also end with a sense of a whole rather than a partial picture which in the long run may be of more benefit to the practitioner than any of the parts alone.